Deliverable D 5.2

Toolbox for the management of the Stakeholders' Group and summary of activities

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ESEP 4 Freight

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Executive summary

In the sector of logistics and transport, the effective coordination of various stakeholders is paramount for ensuring seamless operations and optimizing outcomes. Recognizing this need for collaboration, the ESEP4Freight project has set up a Stakeholders' Group (SG) as a cornerstone of its approach. This group has brought together key actors from across the logistics sector, including decision-makers, industry representatives, and research institutions, to provide valuable insights, feedback, and validation throughout the project lifecycle. Through a combination of online and face-to-face meetings, the SG has served as a conduit for dialogue, innovation, and cooperation, with the overarching goal of enhancing freight transport solutions in Europe.

The SG within the ESEP4Freight project has represented an initiative aimed at fostering collaboration and innovation within the logistics sector. By convening representatives from diverse backgrounds and geographic regions, the SG has facilitated the exchange of ideas, identification of challenges, and co-creation of solutions. Chaired by GRUBER, the SG has played a pivotal role in providing feedback on project developments, validating outcomes, and disseminating results, particularly focusing on the Web Platform designed to map rail freight services in Europe. Through its consultative approach and commitment to continuous improvement, the SG has served as a model for future initiatives seeking to maximize stakeholder engagement, drive impact, and address societal needs within the logistics domain.

***Keywords**:* Stakeholders' Group (SG), Logistics sector, Collaboration & innovation, Freight transport solutions, European rail freight, Feedback & validation, Web Platform, Dissemination, Co-creation of solutions, Stakeholder engagement

Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviation / Acronym	Description
BC	Business Case
CO2	Carbon dioxide
DACH	Germany/Austria/Switzerland
DSS	Decision Support System
eFTI	electronic Freight Transport Information
ESEP4Freight	European Shift Enabler Portal for Freight
KAI	Key Assessment Indicator
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
SG	Stakeholders' Group
T5.2	Task 5.2
TG	Target Group
TMC	Technical Management Committee
WP	Work Package

1 Introduction

This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the Stakeholders' Group (SG) established within the ESEP4Freight project and its pivotal role in enhancing cooperation and innovation within the logistics sector.

By delving into the objectives, functions, and impact of the SG, this document targets various stakeholders, including project collaborators, industry professionals, policymakers, and researchers.

Through detailed analysis and case studies, the report seeks to elucidate the significance of the SG in driving project success, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, and ultimately advancing freight transport solutions in Europe.

This report includes the outputs of T5.2 and the set of common tools developed for gathering inputs of the SG as well as the description and the results from the activities organised during the project.

2 Management plan of the Stakeholders'Group

To provide clarity and structure, this chapter outlines how the Stakeholders' Group (SG) has been designed, organized, and managed throughout the project. It first explains what the SG is and its role within ESEP4Freight, then presents the selection criteria for its members, the methodology adopted to engage participants, and the schedule of activities and meetings. The following sections also describe how feedback has been collected and integrated into the project's development, ensuring that the SG effectively contributes to the validation and improvement of the ESEP4Freight Web Platform and related tools.

2.1 What is the Stakeholders' Group

ESEP4Freigh created a SG involving all the actors of the logistic sector, including those responsible for the decision-making process when dealing with selecting the best transport options/solutions to boost the cooperation of the actors with the project.

The SG provided ESEP4Freight with inputs on their needs, supplied information to develop the web modules and validated the Web Platform and the tools developed during the project.

This body, chaired by GRUBER, has been established in the first six months of the project and meet during the project in on-line or face-to-face meetings.

The SG has been selected by geographical criteria and composed of, at least, one representant of each Target Group (TG) (showed in the Figure 1).

Target Group	Sub-group	Business requirements [relevance from 1 (low) to 3 (high)]					Expected benefits from a business perspective
		Choose transport option	*Support modal shift to rail*	*Assess sustainable solutions*	*Search for collaboration*	*Manage contracts*	
TG#1 Transport Operator	▪ Road Transport Carrier ▪ Railway Undertaking ▪ Maritime Company	3	1	2	2	1	Increase visibility of the logistics process to find intermodal transport solutions that are greener and more sustainable than those currently employed; Provide opportunities for strategic partnership with intermodal actors.
TG#2 Multimodal Transport Organizer	▪ Combined Transport operator ▪ Multimodal Transport Operator (MTO) ▪ Freight Forwarder	3	2	2	3	3	Increase visibility of the logistics process to find intermodal transport solutions that are greener and more sustainable than those currently employed; Provide opportunities for strategic partnership with intermodal actors.
TG#3 Terminal Operator	▪ Rail-Road Terminal operator ▪ Maritime terminal	1	3	2	3	1	Use project recommendations and tools for improved sustainability and efficiency of service provision; Provide opportunities for strategic partnership with intermodal actors.
TG#4 Transport Node Manager	▪ Logistics platforms manager ▪ Freight Village manager	1	2	2	3	1	Use project recommendations and tools for improved sustainability and efficiency of service provision; Provide opportunities for strategic partnership with intermodal actors.
TG#5 Logistics provider	▪ Third-party logistics (3PL) ▪ Fourth-party logistics (4PL)	2	1	2	3	3	Benefit of ESEP4Freight solutions in terms of efficiency, service flexibility and sustainability when moving their commodities; Employ project's results in operations and tender/contracting phases
TG#6 Customers	▪ Manufacturers ▪ Supplier	1	3	2	1	1	Gain awareness on more sustainable transport solutions, networking, reduce transportation costs, improve environmental performance
Others	▪ Citizens, regulators ▪ Policy makers ▪ Standardisation bodies ▪ International organisations ▪ Research Community	1	3	2	1	1	Advancing research post-project; Facilitate transfer of results to real-life industry cases through the re-use of results; Improve intermodal techno-economic and regulatory aspects through evaluation of the project's results; Definition of future research and innovation directions based on project's acquired knowledge;

Figure 1 The target groups. Source: ESEP4Freight Grant Agreement (2022)

The goal of the SG is to provide feedback and input during the project, with special emphasis on:

- current limitations related to the existing digital/non digital solutions for mapping rail freight services in Europe;
- potential opportunities for a better integration of existing solution;
- new technologies to put in place;
- the identification of main contractual constraints;
- the evaluation of current contractual framework impact on the flexibility of the freight transport;
- the assessment and validation of the Web Platform, and more.

The SG is a consultative body, without direct decision faculty, which strongly influences the progress of the project. It will contribute to the attainment of high-quality project outcomes that are aligned with society's needs, values and expectations; hence, maximising impact and outcomes uptake. The SG might also contribute upon request of the Technical Management Committee (TMC) whenever the project approaches planned milestones, to revise the work done (mainly deliverables and publications), to validate milestones and to provide their critical insight.

The SG is the main element of the transversal activities (Figure 2).

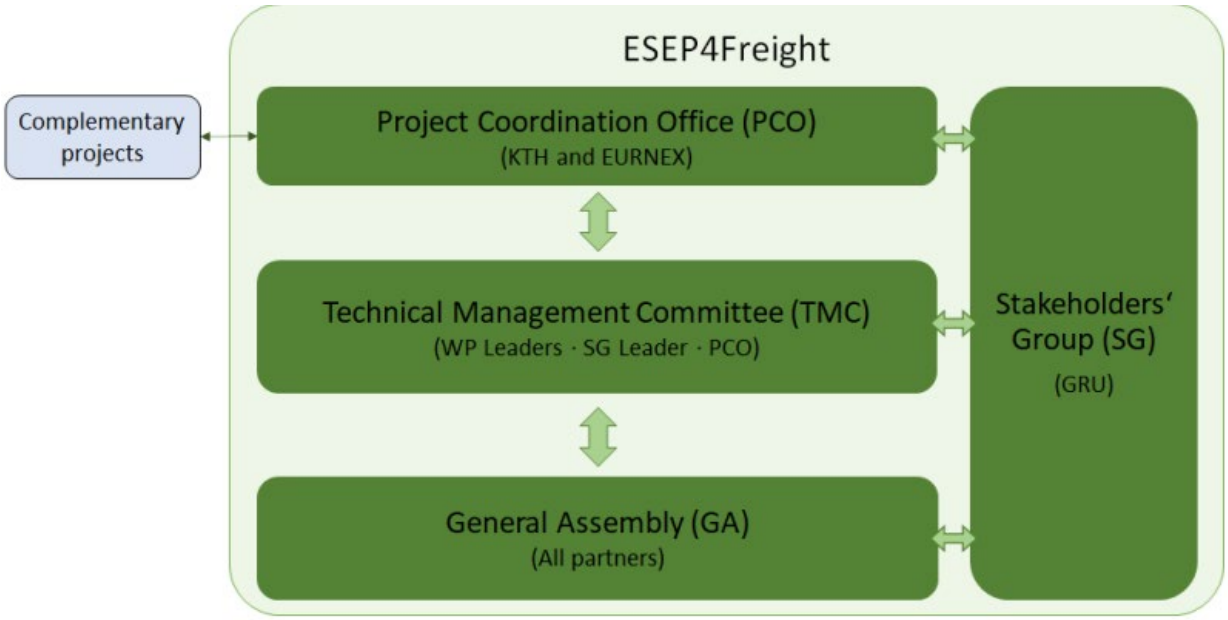

Figure 2 Localization of SG in the framework of the project

This body has been created to bring together all the TGs of the logistic sector including customers, the logistic sector, the rail freight industry, combined transport and inland waterway operators, terminal operators and research institutions from different geographic areas.

The SG, coordinated by GRUBER, had several functions in ESEP4Freight:

- Identification of needs for information in the logistics sector to be incorporated to the Web Platform.
- Providing inputs for the Web Platform, such as data sources for demand analysis or for the Interactive map.
- Testing and validation of the project results, with focus on the Web Platform.
- Dissemination of project results, with focus on the Web Platform.

To fulfil these functions, at least one physical meeting at the beginning of the project has been organised and extra online meetings has been arranged as necessary.

Additionally, a set of common tools such as survey for the collecting of information and feedback and guidelines for conducting the workshops was prepared.

2.2 Importance of the SG

The Stakeholders' Group (SG) holds significant importance within project ESEP4Freight for several reasons:

Feedback and Inputs: The SG provides valuable feedback and inputs from diverse stakeholders within the logistics sector. This ensures that the project aligns with the real needs and challenges faced by those directly involved in the industry.

Validation and Testing: By validating and testing project outcomes, especially the Web Platform in this case, the SG ensures that the developed solutions meet the required standards of functionality, usability, and effectiveness.

Dissemination of Results: The SG plays a crucial role in disseminating project results, particularly focusing on the Web Platform, which enhances visibility and fosters adoption within the logistics community and beyond.

Cross-Sectoral Collaboration: By bringing together representatives from various target groups and geographic areas, the SG promotes cross-sectoral collaboration and knowledge exchange, leading to more comprehensive and holistic solutions.

Maximizing Impact: The SG contributes to maximizing the impact of the project outcomes by ensuring alignment with society's needs, values, and expectations. This helps in achieving high-quality results that are relevant and beneficial to the broader community.

Continuous Improvement: Through regular meetings and interactions, the SG facilitates continuous improvement by identifying areas for enhancement, exploring new technologies, and addressing emerging challenges or opportunities within the logistics sector.

Overall, the SG serves as a vital bridge between the project team and the broader stakeholder community, ensuring that the project remains relevant, effective, and impactful throughout its lifecycle.

2.3 SG as a best practice for future initiatives

The SG within the ESEP4Freight project serves as an exemplary model for future initiatives in several ways:

The SG includes representatives from all key stakeholders across the logistics sector, ensuring that diverse perspectives and inputs are considered in decision-making processes. While the SG does not make final decisions, its contributions help inform and guide the decisions of the project leadership.

Consultative Approach: By establishing the SG as a consultative body, the project acknowledges the importance of gathering feedback and insights from stakeholders. Future initiatives can follow suit by creating similar platforms for ongoing consultation and collaboration.

Focused Objectives: The SG's clear objectives, such as providing feedback, validating project outcomes, and disseminating results, provide a roadmap for future initiatives. Clearly defined goals help maintain focus and ensure that efforts are directed towards achieving tangible outcomes.

Flexible Meeting Formats: The SG utilizes both online and face-to-face meetings, demonstrating adaptability to different communication preferences and logistical constraints. Future initiatives can benefit from incorporating flexible meeting formats to accommodate diverse participant needs.

Cross-Sectoral Collaboration: The SG fosters collaboration between different sectors within the logistics industry, facilitating knowledge exchange and cross-pollination of ideas. Future initiatives can leverage this model to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation.

Continuous Improvement: Through regular meetings and feedback mechanisms, the SG promotes continuous improvement and refinement of project activities. Future initiatives can prioritize ongoing evaluation and adaptation to ensure relevance and effectiveness over time.

By drawing inspiration from the Stakeholders' Group model established within ESEP4Freight, future initiatives can enhance stakeholder engagement, promote collaboration, and ultimately achieve greater impact within their respective domains.

3 Set of common tools developed for gathering inputs of the SG

To support the active involvement of the Stakeholders' Group, a set of common tools was developed to collect and organize their inputs. These tools ensured that feedback from all participants could be systematically gathered and considered.

3.1 The process of selection

This is how the process of selection of the stakeholder started.

Each Partner had some contacts to ask if they were interested in participating in the Stakeholders' Group. All partners contributed to this research.

Everyone proposed names, initially numerous, and an "invitation" email was sent to each of them.

The invitation mail was the following:

> *Dear X,*
>
> *You are receiving this email since you kindly provided your availability to be involved as "Stakeholder" of the Project ESEP4Freight. Thank you for this.*
>
> *The ESEP4Freight project has as objective to provide actors of the logistics chain with relevant static and open information to facilitate the shift to rail in the European freight transport. This will be supported by the creation of a Web Platform. The Web Platform will comprise several modules pivoting around an interactive map which will provide information about, among others, the rail infrastructure, combined transport terminals, rail services, and freight flows in Europe. The modules will include a CO2 calculator, a schedule viewer, a contract toolbox and a match making tool.*
>
> *Belonging to the ESEP4Freight "Stakeholders' Group" means being able to closely follow all the developments of the project and be able to provide feedback on them in the different phases. It is therefore an opportunity to be able to immediately participate in an initiative that we believe could be very important for the future of rail freight transport.*
>
> *What you will be asked to do is to give your opinion on different phases of the project, to help us to understand what the market demands are on such a challenging topic, and to share with us your opinion on the Web Platform when launched. You will be asked to do this via questionnaire or simply by responding to emails on the topic. In addition, you will be invited to at least one all-expenses paid physical meeting, to discuss the topic together with other key actors of the European logistic sector.*
>
> *We kindly ask you to answer this email to confirm your participation.*
>
> *We are available in any moment for any need,*

3.2 The final composition of the SG

Many answered but, as expected, not all the contacted people confirmed their availability. The process was long, but it is possible to say that after the first six month of work the Consortium could count on 24 stakeholders. Figure 3 shows their name, role, company and target group reference.

Target Group (#)	Organization	Nation	Partner proposing
1	Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat	Spain	EURECAT
1	GPA	Spain	EURECAT
1	ALICE	Belgium	GRUBER
1	Green Cargo	Sweden	KTH
1	GATX Rail	DACH	SGKV
1	Renfe	Spain	UPM
2	HUPAC	Spain	EURECAT/EURNEX/TEN
2	Hupac	Switzerland	UIRR
2	Kombiverkehr	Germany	UIRR
3	Port Barcelona	Spain	EURECAT
3	CENIT	Spain	EURECAT
3	Combinant	Belgium	UIRR
3	WienCont	Austria	UIRR
3	CIM	Italy	ZAI
4	CIMALSA	Spain	EURECAT
4	General Council of Chambers of Commerce of Catalonia	Spain	EURECAT
4	Jernhusen	Sweden	KTH
4	DGG	DACH	SGKV
4	Europlatforms	Italy	ZAI
5	ACE (Asociación de Cargadores de España)	Spain	EURECAT
5	Transporeon	Germany	GRUBER
6	Zalando	Company: Germany. Per	EURNEX
6	P&G	DACH	SGKV
6	Shippers Association	Spain	TENALACH

Figure 3 List of the Stakeholders' Companies of the ESEP4Freight project

4 Description and results of the activities organised during the project

4.1 Physical meeting in Verona

4.1.1 Preparation and development

On February 27, 2024, stakeholders in the freight transport industry convened at the Interporto “Quadrante Europa” in Verona for the ESEP4Freight STAKEHOLDERS’ GROUP meeting (Figure 4). The day commenced with Alberto Milotti from ZAI and Fabrizio Borgogna from Gruber Logistics delivering institutional greetings, underscoring the importance of the Stakeholders’ Group in shaping the industry's future. Following this, Serge Schamschula from ALICE presented the ALICE Whitepaper titled "Increasing the Use of Rail and Intermodal Transport in Europe," shedding light on strategies to enhance rail and intermodal transportation. Eric Feyen from UIRR then delved into the Intermodal Transport Policy Framework, with a specific focus on the Greening Freight Transport Package, highlighting initiatives aimed at sustainability. Subsequently, Alberto Milotti from Consorzio ZAI provided valuable insights into the trend of combined traffic observed over the past two years, offering valuable data for industry stakeholders. Serge Schamschula from Transporeon then facilitated a discussion on modal shift and strategies to improve it, encouraging collaborative brainstorming among participants.

After a brief coffee break, the session resumed with Ingrid Nordmark from KTH introducing the ESEP4Freight Project, outlining its objectives and significance. Vivin Kumar Sudhakar from SGKV and EURECAT then elaborated on the architecture of the ESEP4Freight Platform, providing an overview of its design and functionalities. The session culminated in a fruitful brainstorming session moderated by EURNEX, where stakeholders actively contributed ideas and suggestions for the project. The meeting concluded with stakeholders validating project Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), ensuring alignment with industry needs and objectives.

Figure 4 The stakeholders participating in the SG meeting of Verona

Following a light lunch, Fabrizio Borgogna and Greta Sartori Veronese from Gruber Logistics introduced focus groups and organizational aspects for the afternoon session. Participants were divided into three groups, rotating through contemporary round tables focusing on key topics in the rail freight sector. These topics included identifying informative gaps in the rail freight sector, discussing promising innovations and technologies, and addressing challenges and constraints in smart contracts or harmonized contracts in intermodal transport. Each group engaged in dynamic discussions moderated by industry experts, fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration.

The meeting concluded with final remarks from the moderators, summarizing key insights and highlighting action points for future collaboration. With a comprehensive agenda and active participation from stakeholders, the ESEP4Freight SG meeting in Verona proved to be a pivotal event in driving innovation and sustainability in the freight transport industry.

The companies and institutions participating in the SG meeting in Verona were:

- ACE (Asociación de Cargadores de España)
- Centre for Innovation in Transport (CENIT)
- CIM
- CIMALSA
- DGG
- Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat
- GATX Rail
- GPA
- Hupac
- Jernhusen
- P&G
- Port Barcelona
- Transporeon/ ALICE
- Europlatforms

4.1.2 Outputs

In the collaborative setting of a stakeholders' brainstorming session, a multitude of vital topics were explored, ranging from cost estimation to data integration, reflecting a concerted effort to streamline processes within the transportation industry.

The deliberations commenced with a contemplation on cost estimation methodologies, with participants recognizing the importance of interval approximation, especially in the context of complex logistical operations. However, the conversation took a nuanced turn when the discussion veered towards the challenge of implementing real data for CO2 calculation. Acknowledging the significance of accurate carbon footprint assessments, stakeholders grappled with the inherent complexities involved in transitioning from average data to real-time measurements, underscoring the need for innovative solutions in this domain.

Amidst the brainstorming, the notion of collaboration and data sharing emerged prominently, epitomized by the proposal for HUPAC to share their schedules. While the potential benefits of such collaboration were evident, the practicalities of formatting and integrating disparate datasets posed a formidable challenge, warranting further exploration and consensus-building among stakeholders.

The discourse then shifted towards the intricacies of data cleaning and integration, with participants deliberating on methodologies to link diverse data sources effectively. This endeavour underscored the fundamental importance of data quality and interoperability in facilitating seamless information exchange across platforms, thereby enhancing operational efficiency and decision-making processes within the industry.

Moreover, the integration of disparate platforms emerged as a key consideration, with stakeholders advocating for the incorporation of links to other relevant platforms. This collaborative approach sought to augment the functionality and accessibility of transportation-related information, fostering greater synergy and interconnectedness within the ecosystem.

In assessing routes with high potential, stakeholders grappled with the delineation of criteria, deliberating on factors such as empty return trips and the identification of new corridors. The multifaceted nature of this endeavour underscored the need for a comprehensive and nuanced approach to route optimization, one that accounts for both economic viability and environmental sustainability.

The subsequent round table discussions provided a structured forum for stakeholders to delve deeper into specific areas of interest. Groups deliberated on terminal operations, data accessibility, and first/last mile connections, emphasizing the importance of robust data infrastructure and collaborative partnerships in optimizing supply chain efficiency.

Furthermore, discussions on data access control underscored the delicate balance between information sharing and privacy concerns, with stakeholders grappling with the feasibility of limiting access to proprietary data while fostering collaboration and innovation within the industry.

The conceptualization of a match-making tool emerged as a pivotal theme, with stakeholders

envisioning a platform that facilitates the seamless alignment of supply and demand within the transportation ecosystem. From terminal profiling to route optimization, the envisaged tool promised to enhance operational transparency and efficiency, thereby driving value creation across the value chain.

In conclusion, the stakeholders' brainstorming session epitomized a collective endeavour to harness the transformative potential of data-driven insights and collaborative partnerships in reimagining the future of transportation logistics. By fostering an environment of innovation and collaboration, participants laid the groundwork for a more interconnected, efficient, and sustainable transportation ecosystem, poised to meet the evolving demands of the 21st century.

4.1.3 Validation of KPIs

After presenting the KPIs during the Verona meeting, extensive feedback was collected from stakeholders via email. This input has been crucial for refining the performance indicators and ensuring their relevance to the project objectives.

One of the activities carried out with the Stakeholders Group involved the validation of key performance indicators (KPIs) for the ESEP4Freight project. This process was discussed during a meeting on February 27th, after which the validated KPIs were shared with the stakeholders via email. The email communication included the finalized KPIs and highlighted the approval and suggestions gathered during the meeting, ensuring that all stakeholders were informed and aligned on the agreed performance metrics.

4.2 Survey PODS4Rail

Following the stakeholders group meeting in Verona in February 2024, several activities have been conducted primarily through remote communication, with no additional physical meetings. However, there have been numerous email exchanges that can be summarized into these phases:

Activities Overview:

Questionnaire Distribution:

The PODS4Rail questionnaire was distributed to facilitate cross-fertilization between projects. This step aims to gather insights that can enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing among related initiatives.

ESEP4Freight Anonymous Survey:

A specific survey related to the ESEP4Freight project was also administered. This survey is designed to collect valuable data on stakeholders' experiences, challenges, and perspectives regarding freight transport and the transition to rail.

A specific anonymous survey was prepared and launched as part of the ESEP4Freight project to collect feedback from freight transport stakeholders. It aimed to gather insights on current practices, key challenges, and user perceptions regarding the shift toward rail freight. The survey

results directly contribute to WP1 (Data collection, innovation assessments, and analysis of freight flows), serving as a qualitative data source to complement quantitative analyses of freight transport patterns. The feedback supports the identification of innovation needs and user-driven requirements for the ESEP4Freight web platform. The survey also informs the definition of relevant business cases and future platform functionalities.

4.2.1 Preparation and development

On March 25, 2024, an email was sent to key stakeholders and partners involved in the ESEP4Freight project, encouraging participation in a survey related to the future of freight transport, created by the ER JU project Pods4Rail.

The survey's results were intended to support Work Package 1 (WP1) of the ESEP4Freight project.

The message emphasized the importance of completing the survey and requested that recipients share the survey link with their contacts and through social media channels to increase the number of responses. This outreach aimed to ensure a diverse set of insights, contributing valuable information to the project. A direct link to the survey was provided for ease of participation.

4.2.2 Output

The PODS4Rail survey was prepared and developed to gather insights from logistics stakeholders regarding the adoption of digital solutions in rail freight. Designed in collaboration with consortium partners, the survey focused on key areas such as digital documentation, automation, and multimodal integration. Questions were tailored to identify barriers, opportunities, and user expectations. The results will support the development of targeted solutions within the project. Survey findings will feed into validation, exploitation, and stakeholder engagement activities.

4.3 ESEP4Freight Anonymous Survey

For the purpose of quantifying the impact of a possible migration to new digitalized solution in the logistics and transport field, an anonymous survey was prepared to try to have delicate information which companies usually are reluctant to share about contract and document handling expenses.

4.3.1 Preparation and development

The process of inviting stakeholders to participate in the ESEP4Freight survey involved the following steps:

Initial Invitation - April 9, 2024: GRUBER Logistics sent an email to stakeholders introducing the

survey. The email provided an overview of the ESEP4Freight project and emphasized the importance of gathering input through the survey. Stakeholders were asked to complete the survey by April 23, 2024. The email included a direct link to the Google Forms survey and offered assistance in case of any questions.

Follow-up Reminder - April 19, 2024: A follow-up reminder email was sent to those who had not yet completed the survey or had not communicated their inability to participate. The reminder reiterated the importance of their feedback for the project's progress and again included the survey link for easy access. The tone of the reminder was friendly, highlighting that the survey was short and easy to complete.

These communications aimed to ensure high participation from stakeholders, providing valuable insights to support the objectives of the ESEP4Freight project

We have received 8 answers from the survey.

4.3.2 Output

An anonymous survey was prepared and developed to collect feedback from stakeholders on the usability, relevance, and potential impact of the ESEP4Freight web platform. The questionnaire was designed collaboratively with partners to ensure comprehensive coverage of user needs and expectations. It includes both quantitative and qualitative sections, covering platform functionalities, user interface, and perceived value. The survey supports validation activities in WP4 and stakeholder engagement in WP5. Collected data will inform future platform improvements and guide dissemination efforts.

4.4 The presentation of the platform mock-up to the SG of February 2025

In February 2025, the SG was invited to review the mock-up of the ESEP4Freight web platform. This session aimed to gather early feedback and insights to guide the further development of the platform.

4.4.1 Preparation and development

In recent communications regarding the ESEP4Freight project, a detailed series of exchanges took place regarding the presentation of the prototype for the web platform under development. Fabrizio Borgogna, representing Gruber Logistics, spearheaded the coordination of a meeting to showcase the platform to a diverse group of stakeholders involved in the project. These stakeholders include representatives from various logistics, transportation, and technology organizations across Europe, ensuring that the platform’s design aligns with industry needs.

The initial invitation was sent on December 12, 2024, requesting all participants to provide their

availability for a meeting. Borgogna included a link to a Doodle survey, asking attendees to indicate suitable dates, with a deadline of December 31, 2024. This step was necessary to find a common time slot for all interested parties. The use of Doodle for scheduling proved to be an efficient method, with several participants quickly confirming their availability.

A follow-up message was sent on December 18, 2024, as a reminder for those who had not yet filled out the survey. Borgogna expressed his appreciation for those who had already responded, encouraging the remaining stakeholders to complete the survey by the 31st. This level of communication demonstrated a proactive approach in managing the scheduling process for a project of this scale, ensuring maximum participation from all relevant parties.

As the year progressed, and after collecting the responses, the date for the meeting was finalized. On January 8, 2025, Borgogna informed all stakeholders of the confirmed timing for the presentation. The web platform's prototype would be unveiled on Friday, February 7, 2025, from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM CET. Borgogna clarified that this session would focus on presenting the prototype rather than the final version of the platform. The goal of the meeting was to gather valuable feedback that could be used to refine and enhance the platform's features. This feedback loop is a critical aspect of ensuring the platform's success and relevance to its end-users in the freight and logistics sector.

Further, Borgogna emphasized the importance of this feedback in shaping the development process. He reassured stakeholders that the prototype was still in the developmental phase, underscoring the opportunity for them to influence its functionality and design. The presentation would also serve as a platform for any technical clarifications or suggestions, creating a collaborative environment that would likely lead to a more refined and user-centered final product.

The communication around this event highlights the level of coordination and attention to detail involved in ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned. By keeping everyone informed and involved at each stage, Borgogna and the team are laying the groundwork for a successful collaborative effort in the development of the ESEP4Freight platform. In the coming weeks, further details regarding the platform's features and its implementation will likely be shared with stakeholders, building on the momentum generated by the presentation and feedback session.

This process reflects not only the technical aspects of the project but also the strategic importance of stakeholder engagement in ensuring the platform's ultimate success in facilitating more efficient freight operations.

4.4.2 Output

The meeting on Friday, February 7, 2025, from 10:00 to 11:30 CET, served as an important opportunity to introduce the Web Platform prototype to the Stakeholder Group. This session was held virtually via Teams, with a meeting ID of 368 852 326 194 and a password of xu7k6nU9. The goal of the meeting is to demonstrate the platform's core functionalities and gather feedback from key participants.

At the outset of the meeting, Fabrizio Borgogna from Gruber provided a welcome address, setting the tone for the session and laying the groundwork for the discussions that will follow. Afterward, Celestino Sánchez from EURNEX presented the agenda and outline the meeting's goals, ensuring that all participants are aligned with the objectives.

Francisca Rosell from Eurecat leaded then the core presentation of the Web Platform. She covered an array of functionalities, starting with an overview of the platform, including the feedback received from the Verona pilot. The session included a detailed exploration of several key modules, such as the contract toolbox, the stakeholders' directory, and the 'About Us' section. These components are designed to enhance user engagement and provide relevant information about the platform's stakeholders. Following this, Francisca walked the group through two interactive maps: one focused on terminals and the other designed to estimate route and external costs. She also discussed the corridors' view, providing insight into the logistics of multimodal transport routes and helping users visualize the full network.

After the module presentations, Vivin Sudhakar from SGKV led a brief assessment of the Web Platform prototype. This included evaluating the prototype's effectiveness based on its functionalities and design, followed by a Q&A session to gather initial thoughts and reactions.

The meeting concluded with Celestino Sánchez revisiting the next steps, ensuring that all participants are aware of what will follow the feedback collection and addressing any remaining questions.

The primary objective of the meeting was to familiarize the Stakeholder Group with the Web Platform's capabilities and solicit feedback. The focus was on ensuring that the overall concept is clear to participants and that the functionalities presented are seen as valuable and useful. Participants were encouraged to provide suggestions for improvement, not on specific technical details, but on the broader design and user experience of the platform. The meeting was interactive, with time allocated after each module for questions, ensuring that all attendees can engage with the content and contribute their thoughts.

4.5 The link with WP4

Task 5.2 is closely connected to WP4, ensuring continuity between stakeholder engagement and practical validation. Insights gathered during Task 4.1 and 4.2 have provided a foundation for refining the current activities and aligning them with real-world needs.

A thorough description of the activities linked to WP4 both for T4.1 and T4.2 as well as the activities of the SG on this topic can be found in the D4.1 "Business cases analysis for intermodal transport solutions" (Plehm et al., 2025)

4.6 Final Conference and Stakeholder Engagement

4.6.1 Preparation and development

On April 9, 2025, Fabrizio Borgogna (Gruber Logistics) sent an official invitation to key stakeholders for the Final Conference of the ESEP4Freight project, scheduled for June 4, 2025, at 14:30 during the Transport Logistic trade fair in Munich (Conference Room B61). The event will showcase the project results and provide a first look at the ESEP4Freight digital platform, which is set to launch publicly in August 2025. The message highlighted the importance of stakeholders' contributions and encouraged participation for final discussions and networking opportunities. Registration details were provided in an attachment.

4.6.2 Output

The Final Conference of the ESEP4Freight – European Shift Enabler Portal for Freight project took place on June 4th, 2025, from 14:30 to 15:30 CET, during the prestigious Transport Logistic Trade Fair in Munich, Germany. The event was hosted in Hall B6, Conference Room B61, offering an excellent professional setting within one of Europe's most important logistics and transport exhibitions. The conference marked a major milestone in the project's life cycle, officially presenting the ESEP4Freight Web Platform and summarising the results achieved over the two-year research and innovation action, co-funded by the Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking and the European Union. A wide array of stakeholders was formally invited to attend the session, representing a cross-section of actors across the European freight, rail, logistics, and IT sectors.

The event opened with a short welcome and introduction by project coordinators, who offered a high-level overview of the project objectives, scope, and implementation phases. The core of the session was devoted to the official launch and demonstration of the ESEP4Freight digital platform, which will be made publicly accessible in August 2025. The presentation highlighted the platform's most innovative features, including the Interactive Map (offering a comprehensive view of freight terminals, infrastructure, and services), the Corridors Viewer (providing visualisation of TEN-T rail corridors and related data), the Route Viewer (including intermodal routing with external cost estimates), and the Contract Toolbox, designed to assist users with legal frameworks and harmonisation guidelines. In addition, a proof-of-concept for blockchain-enabled smart contracts aligned with the eFTI Regulation was demonstrated, as well as a Terminal Comparison Tool and Stakeholder Directory to enhance intermodal cooperation.

The session drew strong interest and engagement from the attending stakeholders, who expressed appreciation for the platform's usability and relevance in supporting a modal shift to rail freight. A particularly valuable contribution came from Fabrizio Borgogna of Gruber Logistics, who shared real-world use cases demonstrating how the platform's services could support decision-making, automation, and sustainable logistics practices in multimodal freight contexts. His intervention illustrated how the platform can be integrated into daily operations and digital tools used by logistics operators, reinforcing its practical value.

Importantly, the event also served as a platform for network expansion and future collaboration. A new stakeholder, Mr. Alessio Schipilliti from ITL Bologna (Istituto sui Trasporti e la Logistica), joined the conference and actively participated in the discussions. Mr. Schipilliti, already engaged in several European transport projects, expressed a high level of interest in the platform and the potential for future synergies, particularly in the areas of digitalisation and multimodal network integration. His presence underlined the growing momentum around ESEP4Freight and the importance of continuing its development beyond the project lifecycle.

Among the stakeholders, Andrea Croci from Hupac also voiced strong appreciation for the project's outcomes and the direction taken by the consortium. Feedback from all participants was unanimously positive, with many underlining the added value of the platform's digital tools for enhancing transparency, efficiency, and planning in rail freight. The session concluded with a Q&A and networking moment, allowing for open exchange and direct engagement between the consortium and attendees.

Overall, the Final Conference was a resounding success, not only in terms of attendance and delivery but also in terms of stakeholder enthusiasm, interest in exploitation and follow-up actions, and the visibility achieved at a high-profile international venue. Hosting the event at the Transport Logistic fair in Munich, a hub for global transport and logistics professionals, ensured strong outreach and visibility, perfectly aligning with ESEP4Freight's ambition to influence and contribute to the ongoing digital transformation of freight logistics in Europe.

5 Cooperation among stakeholders

The ESEP4Freight project actively promoted cooperation among different actors in the freight and logistics supply chain, with a particular focus on exploring the opportunities offered by the integration of rail technologies. As seen, as foreseen in the Grant Agreement, this was facilitated through the establishment of the Stakeholders' Group (SG), composed of representatives from each Target Group identified in the project (including logistics operators, terminal managers, infrastructure managers, digital service providers, policy actors, and shippers).

The first official meeting of the SG served to formally launch this collaboration and verify the group's setup (KAI1). The meeting enabled direct dialogue and exchange of views between stakeholders, creating a space to share operational challenges, digitalisation needs, and expectations regarding rail freight development. Key topics discussed included the improvement of multimodal connections, the role of digital platforms, and better integration of services across the supply chain.

In addition to the meetings, cooperation was also fostered through the ESEP4Freight Anonymous Survey and the PODS4Rail Survey, both designed to gather stakeholder feedback on multimodal transport operations, digital tool usability, and innovation barriers. The surveys provided crucial data inputs for WP1 and WP4 and further informed the SG's discussions, validating the project's user-centred approach.

The results of this ongoing collaboration are synthesised in this Deliverable D5.2, which includes a structured analysis of ideas for cooperation that emerged from the SG interactions (KAI2). This analysis highlights concrete proposals for harmonised data sharing, enhanced terminal interoperability, standardised contracts, and collaborative development of digital solutions that support rail freight. These outcomes demonstrate the value of stakeholder engagement in creating a shared vision for a more efficient and integrated multimodal freight system in Europe.

6 Advisory board meetings

An Advisory Board connected to the project was established with members from the FP5-TRANS4M-R project namely Felix Hildebrandt (HaCon), Patrick Seeßle (DB Cargo), and Sneha Gosavi (Lindholmen). Three Advisory Board meetings and one joint workshop have been organised within the framework of the ESEP4Freight project.

The first meeting, held on 28 August 2023, began with a presentation of the participants and an introduction to the ESEP4Freight project. The discussion focused on identifying possible common interests and establishing connections to specific work packages.

The second meeting, on 3 September 2024, reviewed the outcomes of the previous session and provided a general status update. Detailed presentations of results from Work Packages 1, 2, and 3 were given.

The third meeting, held on 13 May 2025, reviewed the outcomes of the previous session and presented the overall project status. A key item on the agenda was the alignment of activities with FP5-TRANS4M-R followed by closing discussions under AOB.

In addition to these Advisory Board meetings, a joint workshop was organised on 25 September 2025. This workshop focused on piloting the results of Work Package 2 and comparing differences and similarities between platforms.

7 Conclusions

This deliverable focused on the ESEP4Freight project, which aims to improve the efficiency and integration of rail transport within the broader multimodal logistics sector. The problem addressed is the need to enhance cooperation and knowledge exchange between various stakeholders, facilitating the adoption of rail technologies in the supply chain. The main objective of this task was to establish a Stakeholders' Group (SG) and engage relevant actors in discussions about cooperation opportunities, challenges, and solutions in the context of rail integration.

The methodology included the organization of dedicated stakeholder meetings, dissemination of targeted surveys (such as the ESEP4Freight Anonymous Survey and PODS4Rail Survey), and structured analysis of stakeholder input and documentation. This multi-pronged approach enabled the project team to gather insights from a wide range of logistics actors, both public and private, representing different segments of the multimodal value chain.

The findings reveal a high level of interest and willingness to cooperate across the sector, with a particular focus on three priority areas: enhanced multimodal connectivity, digitalization of information flows, and harmonization of contractual and technical standards. These discussions also brought to light several persistent obstacles, including incompatibilities between existing digital systems, uneven infrastructure development, and a fragmented regulatory landscape that continues to hamper cross-border rail freight integration.

Despite these challenges, the task has produced encouraging results. Stakeholders contributed several actionable proposals, such as the development of interoperable data-sharing platforms and smart contractual tools to simplify collaboration. These ideas have contributed directly to the project's core deliverables and paved the way for a more inclusive digital transformation of European rail freight logistics.

One of the most promising outcomes is the design and demonstration of a web-based collaborative platform aimed at integrating various digital tools and services under a single access point. This solution offers a practical way to improve information exchange, support intermodal decision-making, and foster a more cohesive logistics ecosystem.

The objectives of the task have been successfully achieved. The Stakeholders' Group was established and activated, feedback loops were created, and clear indications emerged for technical and policy follow-up. The task has proven to be a key enabler for broader project goals, supporting activities in WP1 (data collection and flows) and WP4 (validation), where stakeholder-driven scenarios are being tested against real-world constraints.

An important milestone in the project timeline was the Final Conference, which took place on 4 June 2025, during the Transport Logistic trade fair in Munich, in Hall B6, Room B61, from 10:30 to 12:30 CET. This high-level event served both as a dissemination platform and a final validation moment for the ESEP4Freight solutions. Over two dozen key stakeholders from across Europe were invited to attend, representing infrastructure managers, terminal operators, digital service providers, ports, shippers, and intermodal operators. The conference featured the official presentation of the ESEP4Freight platform, live demonstrations, and use-case applications that illustrated its capacity to support operational planning, contract management, and emissions

tracking in multimodal chains. Stakeholders expressed considerable interest in the platform's practical relevance, its ease of use, and its alignment with ongoing European digitalization and green transition strategies. The event also served as a catalyst for new collaborations, with several attendees expressing their willingness to engage with the platform beyond the project's lifecycle and to explore its integration into other EU-funded transport initiatives.

Looking ahead, the most impactful follow-up actions include piloting the ESEP4Freight platform in real operational environments, addressing specific technical and legal barriers identified by stakeholders, and fostering sustained cooperation among SG members. Continued alignment with EU digital rail freight policy frameworks will be critical to achieving long-term impact.

Future work should also aim to consolidate the Stakeholders' Group into a permanent network or advisory board that can monitor implementation and encourage uptake across member states. There is also potential to expand the platform's functionalities through AI-driven decision support, carbon accounting features, and integration with booking and capacity management systems. These efforts would significantly increase the relevance and scalability of the ESEP4Freight initiative across Europe's evolving freight transport ecosystem.

References

ESEP4Freight Grant Agreement. (2022).

Plehm, M., Müller, B., Nickel, G., Borgogna, F., & Gómez Fernández, J. (2025). *D4.1. Business cases analysis for intermodal transport solutions* (No. D4.1; ESEP4Freight).

Appendices

Appendix 1. Agenda of Verona meeting

ESEP4Freight STAKEHOLDERS' GROUP meeting– AGENDA

Venue: Interporto "Quadrante Europa", VERONA - 27/02/2024

09:00 - Alberto Milotti (ZAI) and Fabrizio Borgogna (Gruber Logistics): *Institutional greetings and the relevance of Stakeholders' Group*

09:15 – Serge Schamschula (ALICE): *ALICE Whitepaper "Increasing the Use of Rail and Intermodal Transport in Europe"*

09:30 – Eric Feyen (UIRR): *The Intermodal Transport Policy Framework' with a focus on the Greening Freight Transport Package*

09:45 – Alberto Milotti (Consorzio ZAI): *Trend of combined traffic of last 2 years*

10:00 – Serge Schamschula (Transporeon): *Modal shift and how we improve?*

10:15 – Coffee break

10:30– Ingrid Nordmark (KTH): *Introduction to ESEP4Freight Project*

10:45 – Vivin Kumar Sudhakar (SGKV and EURECAT): *Architecture of the ESEP4Freight Platform*

11:00 – Brainstorming among the Stakeholders (Moderator: EURNEX)

11:45 – Request of validation of project KPIs by the Stakeholders

12:00 – Light lunch

12:45 – Fabrizio Borgogna and Greta Sartori Veronese (Gruber Logistics): Introduction to focus groups and organizational aspects

13:00 - We divide in 3 groups and participate to three contemporary round tables (25 minutes each, 5 minutes to shift session), to be taken 3 times in order to let each person to participate to all tables

- What are the informative gaps in the rail freight sector that could be covered with online (static) information? (Moderator: SGKV and EURECAT)
- What are the most promising innovations/technologies in the rail freight sector? (Moderator: UPM)
- Challenge and constraints in smart contracts or harmonized contracts in intermodal transport (Moderator: UIRR)

14:30 – *Final remarks* – moderators

15:00 – End of the works